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AUTHOR Adams, Jerome; Hicks, Jack M.
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ABSTRACT

The relationship between male and female leaders' descriptions of their own behavior and the followers' descriptions of the leader's behavior in traditionally male-oriented leadership positions was examined. The data were collected as part of a research project to assess the assimilation of females at West Point and to determine how females were being trained for effective leadership roles. Using the Leadership Opinion Questionnaire, male and female platoon leaders described two leadership characteristics: consideration and structure (task accomplishment). Subordinates rated the platoon leaders on the same dimensions. Results were interpreted in terms of three issues: (1) the importance of sex roles as a leadership variable; (2) the leader's perception of the relative importance of consideration versus structure; and (3) the subordinates' perceptions of performance behaviors which are important in a platoon leader's role. It was found that there were no significant differences between male and female leaders' self description on the dimensions of consideration or structure. It was determined that subordinates perceive female leaders as having more concern for the welfare of the troops, but that both male and female leaders were perceived as equally capable of accomplishing the tasks. (MH)

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Leader Sex, Leader Descriptions of Own Behavior, and Subordinates Description of Leader Behavior

Major Jerome Adams Ph.D.

and

Jack M. Hicks Ph.D.

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Running Head: Leader Behavior

* This paper represents the views of the authors and not the official position of the U.S. Military Academy, the U.S. Army, or any other governmental agency.

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ABSTRACT

In this paper the authors examine the relationship between male and female leaders description of their own behavior and the followers description of the leader's behavior in traditionally male-oriented leadership positions.

The data were collected as part of a larger research effort to assess how women are being assimilated into the Corps of Cadets at West Point, and how the women are being trained to become effective Army leaders.

During the summer of 1978, women cadets in the graduating class of 1980 were assigned for the first time into non-traditional platoon leader roles in predominantly male subordinate units. Both male and female platoon leaders were asked to describe their behavior using the Leadership Opinion Questionnaire (Fleishman, 1960). Two composite scores Consideration and Structure were the dimensions of leadership behavior. Subordinates in the platoons were asked to describe their leader's behavior on the same two dimensions, Consideration and Structure.

The results were interpreted in terms of three major issues: (1) the importance of sex roles as a leadership variable; (2) the leader perceptions of what performance behaviors are more important, Consideration versus Structure, and (3) the subordinates perceptions of what performance behaviors are important in a platoon leader's role.

INTRODUCTION

The concern about how well women can perform in non-traditional leadership roles has been a salient issue in the military particularly with the admission of women as cadets in the service academies. As military planners and researchers began to prepare programs for the development of women as future Army leaders, little empirical research was available in academic resources from which they could draw. Stogdill completed a comprehensive review of leadership research in 1974; however, sex roles and leadership were not systematically addressed. Terborg (1977) prepared a review of the literature on women in management roles. Some studies prior to 1975 suggest that there appears to be a bias in psychology for researchers to study males rather than females or both sexes (see Holmes and Jorgensen 1971; Dan and Beekman, 1972). Thus, military researchers and decision makers need to be cautioned about the generalizability of conclusions drawn from male-based research. Bender (1978) suggests that it remains unclear if social psychological literature on leadership is applicable for women as leaders.

This paper reports the results of a portion of a longitudinal research program to assess how women are being assimilated into the Corps of Cadets at West Point, and how effective the women are being trained to become effective Army officers.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

On October 7, 1975 President Ford signed into law Public Law 94-106, an amendment to which authorized women's admissions to the service academies, including West Point. As a result the academy developed operational plans for the admission of women as cadets.

Four phases of the program, later titled Project Athena, were planned:

- Preadmission phase to prepare cadets and the military community for the arrival of women (Vitters and Kinzer 1978).

- Integration phase which included careful documentation of how women were being integrated into the Corps of Cadets (see Vitters and Kinzer 1977, and Vitters, 1978).

- The Assimilation phase which studies how well women are being fully assimilated into the Corps of Cadets.

- The Graduate Assessment phase which will study how well women are performing their roles as officers.

The first two phases of Project Athena have been completed. The latter two are continuing to be designed and studied.

DESIGN

The design of this study involved five cadet companies where women were assigned into non-traditional roles as platoon leaders for the first time. The platoon leadership positions were for a four week interval after which a leadership change would occur. Women platoon leaders were assigned to both the first and second changeover detail.

At the end of the summer training, all platoon leaders were asked to describe their leadership behavior using Fleishman's Leadership Opinion Questionnaire. At a separate location, the subordinates were assembled to prepare peer ratings. During this time, the subordinates were also asked to describe the behavior of the platoon leaders of each detail using the same dimensions of Consideration and Structure.

Because there were only five women assigned in the non-traditional role as platoon leaders, a matched pair of five men from the same units on alternate details was used (see slide 1). Thus, the subordinates rated both the male and the female leader of the same platoon. The independent variables tested in the design were:

Cadet Companies*
Details within Companies (nested)
Platoon Leader Sex

The dependent measures used were:

Scores on the dimension of Consideration
(Welfare of subordinates)
Scores on the dimension of Structure
(Ability to get the task done)

* The company designations 1 thru 5 are arbitrary to protect the anonymity of the male and female leader participants.

FINDINGS:

In terms of differences between how male and female leaders describe their own behavior, there were no significant differences. That is, there was no significant difference between male and female platoon leaders in how they described themselves on the dimensions of consideration or structure. The authors conclude that the sample of only ten leaders was too small to note any sensitive differences between leaders on either of the criterion dimensions.

In the analyses where the subordinates described the leadership behavior of their leaders, statistically significant effects were noted. When the subordinates used Consideration as the dependent variable a leader sex main effect was noted (see slide 2). The slide shows that the platoon members perceived different behaviors on the part of male and female leaders with regard to the leader's concern for the welfare of the members.

However, because the significance tests do not provide any information about the pattern of effects, a multiple classification analysis was conducted to determine which sex provided more concern for subordinates (Consideration). The results of this analysis are presented in slide 3. The deviation from eta indicated in the LEADERSEX variables reveals that it is the females who are the leaders whom subordinates believe as having more concern for the welfare of the troops.

In the analyses where subordinates were asked to describe the leader behavior of their platoon leaders on Structure (Task Accomplishment) there were no main effects due to LEADERSEX. It is the authors' belief that the subordinates described their platoon leaders as equally capable of getting the task or mission accomplished. The multiple classification analysis revealed no significant difference between LEADERSEX for the Structure dimension (e.g., deviation eta for males -0.41 and 0.43 for females).

DISCUSSION:

The results reported in this study are part of a larger program which is trying to assess how well women are assimilating into the Corps of Cadets. Part of the assessment of full assimilation requires us to examine

how well women are objectively performing in new, non-traditional roles as leaders and what the perceptions are about the women leaders' performance.

The data in this study indicates that the leaders themselves do not report any difference in how they see their platoon leader roles. This may well be an artifact in the methodology of too small a sample -- 10 leaders.

The more promising results indicate that subordinates do see male and female leader differences. Women are reported to be more sensitive to the welfare of subordinates Perhaps one may associate a priori the feminine communal values: sympathy, sensitivity and consideration as behaviors one may expect to typically find in women leaders (see Spence and Helmreich,1974). It is important to note that these behaviors are important for a leader -- especially one who will be expected to lead in an Army that requires the integrated services of both men and women.

Subordinates also reported no difference in leader behaviors between male and female platoon leaders in their activities to accomplish the mission (Structure). In this study, the authors are encouraged to find no statistically significant differences due to sex. Should men have higher subordinate scores on this dimension, one could possibly infer that there men were more inclined to get the job done than women.

The issues and concerns of how women are performing in new non-traditional roles will continue to be studied. Objective performance measures of how well women have performed in these roles is still being analyzed. Finally, comparisons of male superiors attitudes toward women in the Army and the superior's evaluations of men and women's performance is also being analyzed to see if any sex bias in evaluation of women leaders is unique to those male superiors with traditional beliefs.

Cadet Company	Leader Sex	Training Detail
1	Female	First Four Weeks Training
	Male	Second Four Weeks Training
2	Female	First Four Weeks Training
	Male	Second Four Weeks Training
3	Female	First Four Weeks Training
	Male	Second Four Weeks Training
4	Male	First Four Weeks Training
	Female	Second Four Weeks Training
5	Male	First Four Weeks Training
	Female	Second Four Weeks Training

* A sixth company was originally planned in the design however, the female who was designated to be the platoon leader voluntarily resigned and the orthogonal block of 3 women first detail 3 women second detail was lost.

SLIDE 1 Independent Variables: Company
Training Detail
Leader Sex

*HIERARCHIAL ANOVA: CRITERION (CONSIDERATION)

SOURCE	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIGNIFICANCE OF F
MAIN EFFECTS	170.30	2.46	.025
LEADERSEX	786.97	11.36	.001
DETAIL	8.43	0.12	.999
COMPANY	56.61	0.82	.999
2 WAY INTER-ACTIONS			
LEADERSEX COMPANY	151.96	2.19	0.088
EXPLAINED	164.19	2.37	0.014
RESIDUAL	69.27		

SLIDE 2 Leader Sex Main Effect for Subordinates description of leader behavior of Consideration

* Hierarchial approach (option 10) invokes the stepdown procedure. The sum of squares associated with the main effect for the first variable is not adjusted for any other variables. The sum of squares for the main effect for the second variable considered is adjusted only for the first variable, and so on (See Nie et.al., 1970)

MULTIPLE CLASSIFICATION ANALYSIS

VARIABLE & CATEGORY	UNADJUSTED DEV'N ETA	ADJUSTED FOR INDEPTNDENT VARIABLES DEV'N ETA
LEADERSEX		
1 MALE	-1.70	-1.71
2 FEMALE	1.80	1.80
	0.21	0.21
DETAIL	0.03	0.02
COMPANY	0.11	0.11

SLIDE 3 Multiple Classification Analyses

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